

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION (OP-0939)
SHIPS' HISTORIES SECTION

HISTORY OF SHIPS NAMED REPOSE

USS REPOSE (AH-16) is the second ship of the fleet to bear the name.

The first REPOSE was originally a passenger-cargo steamer built in 1896 by the Delaware River Company, Chester, Pennsylvania. She engaged in the New England coastal trade until outbreak of the Spanish-American War when she was purchased by the Army and converted into the Army Hospital Ship RELIEF. She served the War Department in waters ranging from the Philippines to ports of China. Having returned to the West Coast of the United States, RELIEF was transferred from the War Department to the Navy Department 13 November 1902. Placed in reserve upon her transfer, she fitted out as a Navy hospital ship in the Mare Island Navy Yard during 1904-1905. But the controversy of whether a line officer or medical officer would command the Navy hospital ship worked to delay her commissioning.

The war with Spain in 1898 had seen the Navy making more extensive use of hospital ships. This had led to the controversy at the turn of the century between the Medical Corps and the Line, over the question of command of hospital ships. Surgeon General of the Navy, Presley M. Rixey, reasoned that since a hospital ship is in fact a hospital afloat, a medical officer would be best qualified to command such a ship; furthermore, that placing hospital ships under the command of combatant officers might, under the Hague and Geneva Conventions, disqualify them for immunity from attacks.

The Bureau of Navigation replied that medical doctors having neither training nor experience in navigation and ship handling were, therefore, not qualified to command. The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery countered with a proposal to place navigation, deck, and engineering functions in the hands of a competent sailing master and a civilian crew, because the "command is eminently a non-combatant one."

The Secretary of the Navy and the President endorsed Surgeon General Rixey's views. In a letter of 4 January 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to the Secretary of the Navy: "The hospital ships of the Navy will hereafter, unless otherwise directed by Congress, be placed under the control and command of medical officers of the Navy, their navigation being exclusively controlled by a competent sailing master and civilian crew, the sailing master having the complete responsibility for everything connected with the navigation of the ship...Military surgeons, including naval surgeons, have special knowledge of hospital ships, and they have in addition certain military duties of command, organization drills and discipline, just as do officers of the line, awarding punishments and being guided and governed in these military duties by the same regulations that guide and govern officers of the line. The command of hospital ships should unquestionably be vested in a medical officer, and no line officer should be aboard it." This decision was altered by a

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Congressional Act of 29 August 1916 which allowed navigation, deck, and engineering duties in a hospital ship to be assigned to line officers of the Naval Reserve Force, but left the command with a medical officer. Thus it came about that RELIEF commissioned 6 February 1908, Surgeon Charles F. Stokes, U.S. Navy, commanding.

RELIEF had a length overall of 314 feet; extreme beam, 46 feet; displacement, 3,300 knots; mean draft, 15 feet, 10 inches and a designed complement of 16 officers and 105 men. Her average speed was 16-17 knots and her four principal wards designed to care for 195 patients. Her medical officer in command, his staff and assistants and older hospital corps men were all specially selected for service in her. The class just graduated from the Hospital Corps Training School in Washington were transferred to her in a body. Thus RELIEF, according to the announced policy of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, became a sort of post-graduate training school for apprentices. These men and others attached to RELIEF acquitted themselves most admirably.

The world cruise of the "Great White Fleet" of sixteen battleships to promote President Theodore Roosevelt's diplomacy led to RELIEF's commissioning in the Mare Island Navy Yard 6 February 1908. She stood out of San Francisco Bay 22 March and arrived in Magdalena Bay, Mexico, the night of 27 March 1908. Having embarked 152 sick accumulated since the battleships had sailed from Hampton Roads, Virginia, 16 December 1907, she came into San Francisco from Magdalena Bay with her load of patients 7 April 1908. After transferring the serious and chronic cases to the naval hospital, she rejoined the fleet at San Diego, thence north as far as Seattle while the battleships visited ports of the West Coast.

During the West Coast visit of the Atlantic Fleet battleships, RELIEF helped stem an invasion of scarlet fever that overtook battleship NEBRASKA at San Francisco. She stood out to sea in advance of the battleships 3 July 1908, taking station at Honolulu where she again came to the rescue of NEBRASKA. She received diphtheria patients from that battleship who was able to continue on the world cruise without further delay. The hospital ship departed Honolulu 22 July, replenishing the surgical and medical supplies of nearly every battleship whom she spared any delays or inconveniences on account of quarantine at various ports. She was available for expert medical care, treatment and consultations for more than 14,000 officers and men of the "Great White Fleet" as their cruise continued to Pago Pago, Samoa; Auckland, New Zealand; Sydney, Australia; and Manila, Philippine Islands. At Honolulu, RELIEF received 59 cases of contagious diseases. These men, after all danger of contagion was over, were returned to their respective ships in Australian ports. At Auckland and Sydney, a number of patients who would otherwise have had to be left at hospitals ashore, were taken on RELIEF and returned to their battleships at Manila.

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RELIEF was detached from the "Great White Fleet" in November 1908 while at Olongapo, Philippine Islands. The Surgeon General of the Navy reported: "No such range or type of in-every-way desirable and beneficial services could have been performed by anything short of a hospital ship. The RELIEF's detachment from the fleet was a distinct loss to the efficiency of the fleet, as can be clearly demonstrated." RELIEF had treated 649 patients, nearly half of whom soon returned to duty, and 102 surgical operations were performed. There had been 125 admissions for contagious diseases, all demanding more or less rigid isolation, and six deaths had occurred.

Having been detached from the "Great White Fleet", RELIEF departed Cavite in the Philippines 14 November 1908, enroute to Guam on the first leg of a return voyage to the Pacific Coast of the United States. But she encountered a typhoon 18-19 November which so disabled her that she put back to the Philippines. She returned to Cavite 26 November 1908 and was found unseaworthy by a board of inspection and survey. Repairs enabled RELIEF to serve as a station-ary hospital (naval floating dispensary) at the Naval Station, Olongapo, Philippine Islands. She arrived on her new station 25 January 1909 and decommissioned there 10 June 1910. She continued in service as a floating station hospital at Olongapo until the close of World War I. During that war, 11 April 1918, her name was changed to REPOSE and the name RELIEF assigned to a new hospital ship authorized for construction.

REPOSE (ex-RELIEF) was sold for scrapping in the Philippines 15 May 1919.

LIST OF COMMANDING OFFICERS

Surgeon Charles F. Stokes, USN:	6 Feb 1908- 1 Dec 1908
Surgeon Arthur W. Dunbar, USN:	1 Dec 1908-18 Feb 1910
Surgeon Robert E. Ledbetter, USN:	18 Feb 1910-10 Jun 1910

The second REPOSE (AH-16) was laid down 22 October 1943 as the merchant cargo ship, SS MARINE BEAVER under terms of a Maritime Commission contract let to the Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, Chester, Pennsylvania. Having been selected for conversion to a Navy hospital ship, she was designated REPOSE (AH-16), effective 22 June 1944. The hospital ship launched 8 August 1944, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Pauline P. McIntire, wife of Vice-Admiral Ross T. McIntire, Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. Delivery of REPOSE was accepted by the Navy 14 September 1944. She was towed to the Bethlehem Steel Shipbuilding Yard in New York to fit out as a Navy hospital ship. She had a length overall of 520 feet; extreme beam, 71 feet, 6 inches; limiting displacement of 15,400 tons; limiting draft, 24 feet; a designed speed of 18.7 knots; and designed crew and staff accommodations for 70 officers and 498 men. When first

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commissioned she had on board 48 officers, 32 nurses, 24 Chief Petty Officers; 238 Hospital Corpsmen and 230 enlisted men in her crew.

REPOSE (AH-16) commissioned 26 May 1945, Captain William O. Britton, USNR, commanding. She departed New York 6 June for shake-down training out of Norfolk until 8 July when she sailed for duty in the Pacific. She transited the Panama Canal 14 July and reached Pearl Harbor the 29th to embark 700 patients brought safely to San Francisco 13 August 1945. As she debarked patients, 15 August, hostilities with Japan ceased. Standing out of San Francisco Bay 24 August she touched Honolulu 1 September to embark 324 Army nurses, 12 Army doctors and 36 Army Medic passengers enroute to Buckner Bay, Okinawa.

REPOSE entered Buckner Bay 15 September 1945 and was to have embarked her passengers the following day. But the next morning found her ordered out to sea to ride out a typhoon. She headed into 80-knot winds and swells from 40-50 feet high. That afternoon a message received from Guam advised all ships to head west. But the rather top-heavy single-screw REPOSE, riding straight across ever more mountainous swells, could not change course without endangering the ship and her company. By 2100 of 16 September 1945. REPOSE was in the center of disturbance. The wind had been recorded at 150 knots, swells at 60-90 feet, and the barometer had a reading of 25.55. The mercury had dropped out of sight but REPOSE had passed safely through the eye of a typhoon by early morning of 17 September 1945 and lived to tell the tale. For this accomplishment her officers and crew were given certificate cards as members of the "Hole in the Doughnut Club."

REPOSE suffered minor damage in the typhoon, losing one motor launch, having one life boat damaged, and her radio became unable to transmit. After receiving orders via blinker light, she proceeded to Hagushi Anchorage, Naha Bay on the China side of Okinawa 18 September where she debarked the Army medical personnel and fueled. She departed 25 September 1945 for Shanghai, China, and was one day from that port when the outbound hospital ship RELIEF with evacuating Allied prisoners-of-war flashed a message "Shanghai will greet you with open Arms." REPOSE entered port the 30th and spent the next thirteen months moving from one buoy to another while handling Seventh Fleet sick and Naval Group China personnel. Most Marines from North China were sent to REPOSE by air for treatment and disposition. There was one brief interruption of this service 10-18 March 1946 when she temporarily shifted to Tsingtao for the evacuation of a Marine Field Hospital.

REPOSE sailed for home 15 October 1946 and passed under the Golden Gate Bridge 1 November to debark patients at Pier #7, San Francisco, California. Following overhaul in the San Francisco Naval Shipyard, she stood out of San Francisco Bay 5 February 1947. After touching Pearl Harbor and Yokosuka she took station 1 March.

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1947 in the Inner Harbor of Tsingtao, China, to serve as a base hospital for the Seventh Fleet. Several trips were made to Yokosuka for repairs and replenishment by 17 March 1949 when REPOSE shifted to Shanghai.

On 21 March 1949 United States Consul General to Shanghai, J.M. Cabot was admitted on board REPOSE for a one night stay. She shifted back to Tsingtao the 25th but as Communist Chinese endangered the foreign settlement at Shanghai, she moved to provide refuge to American as well as British nationals. She took station in the Woosung River Entrance 21 April. The following day LSM-440 brought to her the British naval casualties from Communist Chinese attackers, men from HMS LONDON. Later she received casualties from HMS AMETHYST and HMS CONSORT. A total of 77 British casualties and 118 American evacuees were embarked from Communist-endangered Shanghai by 29 April when REPOSE sailed for the British Base at Hong Kong, China. There, 1 May 1949, she debarked the British naval patients to the British Naval Hospital.

REPOSE called at Manila thence to Yokosuka, Japan, where her emergency evacuees from Shanghai debarked. She returned to the Woosung Anchorage 17 May, receiving 22 evacuees from Shanghai by the 22nd. The nationality of these refugees were American, British, Chinese, Russian, Austrian, German, Dutch, Italian and Belgian. The evacuees were debarked at Hong Kong 2 June 1949. REPOSE departed that port 25 June for home, picking up patient-passengers at Manila and Pearl Harbor enroute to Long Beach, California, arriving 27 July 1949. She entered the San Francisco Naval Shipyard for inactivation overhaul and decommissioned there 19 January 1950. She was assigned to the San Francisco Group, U.S. Pacific Reserve Fleet.

The Communist invasion of South Korea and resulting intervention by the United Nations soon brought REPOSE out of reserve. She left her berth 16-17 August 1950 for sea trials and reactivated 26 August 1950 as USNS REPOSE (AH-16). Assigned to the Military Sea Transport Service, her navigation department was headed by Merchant Ship Master, Louis H. Brunschon. Captain E.B. Coyal, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy was commanding officer of the naval hospital embarked in REPOSE. She departed San Francisco Bay 2 September 1950 and touched Yokosuka 16-17 September before arrival at Pusan 20 September 1950 to serve as a Station General Hospital for United Nations Forces in Korea.

REPOSE departed Pusan 24 October 1950 with 180 United Nations Casualties bound for Yokohama. She entered that port the 27th, transferring all casualties except Navy and Marine Corps patients to hospitals ashore. The following day she commissioned in the United States Navy, her civilian crew being replaced by sailors and officers under the command of Captain Charles H. Perdue, USN. On 9 November 1950 she was enroute to newly won Inchon, interrupting her stay there to evacuate from Chinnampo, 752 casualties from the Pyongyang Hospital.

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While anchored at Inchon 2-3 January 1951, she was shaken by concussion of the heavy bombardment of the Fleet supporting United Nations ground troops ashore. She resumed station duty at Pusan 9 January 1951, making periodic trips to evacuate patients to shore hospitals in Japan, and calling at various ports of Korea to embark battle casualties. She celebrated the completion of one year service in the Korean Theater of Operations 29 September 1951 by giving a party for 500 children of the "Happy Mountain Orphanage" in Pusan, Korea.

The Christmas and New Year season brought distinguished guests to REPOSE. On 27 December 1951 Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York, accompanied by General James A. VanFleet, Commanding General of the Eighth U.S. Army of Korea, greeted every patient. The 13th of January 1952, President Syngman Rhee and Mrs. Rhee, along with American Ambassador, John B. Muccio, visited the hospital ship.

REPOSE departed Pusan 15 January 1952 and arrived at Yokosuka the 18th to prepare for return home. By the time of her departure 22 January 1952, she had admitted a total of 11,025 patients. Thousands of others had received out-patient treatment and she had evacuated 1,569 patients from Korea to shore hospitals in Japan. A Marine Band, Hula dancers, Red Cross and ranking officers met the hospital ship 2 February when she reached Pearl Harbor. She sailed the 4th with 238 patients in the hospital bound for San Diego, California. She debarked her passengers and patients upon arrival there 11 February 1952 and entered the Long Beach Naval Shipyard the following day for overhaul until 18 May 1952.

REPOSE departed San Diego 31 May 1952 for another tour of service in support of United Nations Forces in Korea. After calls at Pearl Harbor and Sasebo she stationed herself as a base hospital at Inchon, Korea, arriving 24 June 1952. Two brief intervals were spent in Japanese ports following evacuation trips from Inchon before her departure from Inchon 9 February 1953 for Yokosuka. She sailed from the last named port 14 February, calling at Pearl Harbor enroute to San Francisco where she arrived 6 March 1953. After transferring her patients to the U.S. Naval Hospital at Oakland, she overhauled in the Craig Shipyard, Long Beach, California.

On 17 May 1953, REPOSE again sailed for the Far East, arriving at Yokosuka 5 June thence to Inchon where she immediately admitted U.S. Marines for treatment. Inchon again served as her main operating base, with time out for brief availability at Yokosuka and Sasebo and one call at Hong Kong. She departed Inchon, Korea, 15 January 1954 for Yokosuka, thence to sea the 23rd for return to San Diego, California arriving 11 February 1954. After serving the Fleet as a floating hospital at Long Beach, California, she entered the San Francisco Naval Shipyard 2 September 1954 for inactivation overhaul. She decommissioned 21 December 1954 and was assigned to the U.S. Pacific Reserve Fleet. She was again ordered activated in June 1965 and is scheduled for commissioning in October as a unit of the Service Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

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USS REPOSE (AH-16) earned nine battle stars for support of the United Nations Forces in Korea and other awards for operations listed below:

- 1 Star/NORTH KOREAN AGGRESSION:
20 Sep-24 Oct 1950
- 1 Star/COMMUNIST CHINA AGGRESSION:
13 Nov 1950-24 Jan 1951
- 1 Star/FIRST U.N. COUNTER OFFENSIVE:
25 Jan-1 Apr 1951
- 1 Star/COMMUNIST CHINA SPRING OFFENSIVE:
22-27 Apr 1951; 8-14 May 1951; 8 Jun-8 Jul 1951
- 1 Star/U.N. SUMMER-FALL OFFENSIVE:
9 Jul-4 Aug 1951; 22 Aug-7 Oct 1951; 22 Oct-19 Nov 1951
- 1 Star/SECOND KOREAN WINTER:
28 Nov 1951-16 Jan 1952
- 1 Star/KOREAN DEFENSE, SUMMER-FALL 1952:
24 Jun-1 Jul 1952; 20 Aug-10 Oct 1952; 28 Oct-30 Nov 1952
- 1 Star/THIRD KOREAN WINTER:
1-13 Dec 1952; 30 Dec 1952-9 Feb 1953
- 1 Star/KOREA, SUMMER-FALL 1953:
14 Jun-27 Jul 1953
- NAVY OCCUPATION SERVICE MEDAL (ASIA):
7-25 Sep 1945; 23-27 Feb 1947;
12-27 Sep 1948; 24-30 May 1949
- CHINA SERVICE MEDAL:
26 Sep-15 Oct 1946; 28 Feb 1947-9 Sep 1948
28 Sep 1948-5 May 1949; 2-25 Jun 1949
- KOREAN SERVICE MEDAL & UNITED NATIONS SERVICE MEDAL:
16 Sep 1950-22 Jan 1952; 20 Jun 1952-14 Feb 1953
5 Jun-20 Nov 1953; 7 Dec 1953-23 Jan 1954
- KOREAN PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION BADGE:
16 Sep 1950-22 Jan 1952; 20 Jun 1952-27 Jul 1953

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Captain William O. Britton, USNR:	26 May 1945-21 Oct 1945
Commander Felix S. Desoboll, USNR:(temp)	31 Oct 1945-22 Dec 1945
Lieutenant Alva E. Mitchell, USNR:(temp)	22 Dec 1945- 9 Jan 1946
Captain Charles L. LeBarge, USNR:	9 Jan 1946- 8 Jun 1946
Captain William R. Thayer, USNR:	8 Jun 1946-25 Jan 1947
Captain Edward W. Gordon, Jr., USN:	25 Jan 1947-22 Sep 1948
Captain Woodson W. Michaux, USN:	22 Sep 1948- 9 Nov 1948
Captain Alexander MacIntyre, USN:	9 Nov 1948-25 Nov 1949
Commander F.E. Wexel, USN:	25 Nov 1949-19 Jan 1950
Master Louis H. Brunschon, Maritime	26 Aug 1950-23 Oct 1950
Captain Charles H. Perdue, USN:	28 Oct 1950-21 Jan 1951
Commander Paul J. Williams, USNR:	21 Jan 1951-12 Jan 1953
Captain John M. Wyckoff, USN:	12 Jan 1953-27 Sep 1954
Commander W.W. Hargrave, USN:	27 Sep 1954-21 Dec 1954

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